



# PRESS RELEASE

*Office of the United States Attorney  
Middle District of Florida*

**PAUL I. PEREZ**  
**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY**

400 North Tampa Street  
Suite 3200  
Tampa, Florida 33602  
813/274-6000  
813/274-6300 (Fax)

Post Office Box 600  
200 West Forsyth Street  
Jacksonville, Florida 32201  
904/232-2682  
904/232-2620 (Fax)

80 North Hughey Avenue,  
Room 201  
Orlando, Florida 32801  
407/648-7500  
407/648-7643 (Fax)

2110 First Street,  
Suite 3-137  
Fort Myers, Florida 33901  
239/461-2200  
239/461-2219 (Fax)

Contact: Steve Cole ♦ Public Affairs Specialist ♦ 813/274-6352

**For Immediate Release**

October 1, 2002

**JURY CONVICTS NINE COLOMBIAN MARITIME TRAFFICKERS**  
**FOR SMUGGLING OVER 6 TONS OF COCAINE**

On October 1, 2002, nine (9) defendants were convicted of two counts of drug smuggling and trafficking on the high seas relating to the May 23, 2002, seizure of approximately 6.5 tons of cocaine on board the Colombian-flagged fishing vessel (F/V) Punta Del Este. The F/V Punta Del Este was interdicted approximately 1,600 miles off the coast of Colombia in the Eastern Pacific Ocean by the United States Coast Guard and United States Navy. Members of the Coast Guard law enforcement detachment team (LEDET Team), located the approximate 100 million dollars worth of cocaine in a hidden compartment inside the F/V Punta Del Este's main fuel tank.

U. S. Attorney Paul Perez commended the U. S. Coast Guard on their efforts in this investigation and stated, "The U. S. Coast Guard conducted a very thorough search in this investigation and uncovered a well hidden supply of illegal drugs. Thanks to their diligence these smugglers are behind bars and the drugs were kept from reaching the shores of our country and the streets of our communities."

Following 6 days of trial before United States District Court Judge James S. Moody, Jr., a jury convicted all 9 defendants on both counts. The defendants convicted were:

ANGEL NERI ESTRADA-TELLO; ARCESIO CAICEDO-MONTANO; JULIO CESAR DIAGO; MARCO ANTONIO ARAUJO-ESTRADA; YIMY ARAUJO-ESTRADA; SIGIFREDO OLIVEROS-ESTUPINAN; EDGAR FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ-RAMOS; RUBEN ORLANDO ESCOBAR; and WILFRIDO FLOREZ-MONTANO.

The defendants face sentences of between twenty (20) years' to life imprisonment, depending on their respective roles in the offense. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Anthony Porcelli and Joseph K. Ruddy, Chief. The case was jointly investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Customs Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.